

The season will be upon us in a very short time. Public pools and home pools will be open for summer fun.

Drowning Prevention information is not "for someone else". It is for you. Because only by increased awareness and effort can we reduce some very alarming statistics. Drowning is one of the largest causes of accidental death for American infants and children under the age of five while at home and on vacation.

Drowning Prevention Tips

- **There is no substitute for adequate supervision.**
- Pools and spas are attractive to children, and children must be kept away from them in the absence of adequate supervision. A fence, wall or natural/artificial barrier should completely enclose your pool or spa. All gates or doors with access to the pool or spa should have a spring lock, self-closing and self-latching mechanism that protects against unauthorized entry and use. (The inside latch should be **above the reach** of toddlers or young children.)



- Check with you state or local government to learn their specific legal requirements concerning fencing around pools and spas. You cannot be too cautious. If your pool, spa or hot tub is indoors, lock the door to the room or have a cover that locks, to keep out children and other unauthorized users.
- Do not place objects (e.g., chairs or tables) near the pool or spa fence that would allow a youngster to climb over. Tree limbs and low overhanging roofs should be removed or made inaccessible.
- A float line stretched across a pool indicating where the deep end begins can avoid a dangerous excursion by young children into water over their heads.
- A clear view of the pool or spa from the house should be assured by removing vegetation and other obstacles. Trespassers or unexpected swimmers can be discovered by an occasional glance at the pool or spa area.
- Reaching and throwing aids should be kept on both sides of the pool. These items should remain stationary and not be misplaced through play activities.
- Pools or spas should never be used if any of the grate outlets are missing or broken.

- Make certain that all doors leading from the house to the pool or spa area have a self-closing, self-latching mechanism **above the reach of toddlers** to protect against unauthorized entry and use.
- If you use a pool or spa cover, carefully read and follow the manufacturer's directions for safe installation, use and maintenance. Always completely remove the cover before using your pool or spa, to avoid the possibility of anyone - especially a small child -- being trapped and drowning under the cover. Drain any standing water from the surface of your pool or spa cover. An infant or small child can drown even in the smallest amount of water. Be especially alert for the potential for drowning accidents if you use any of the lightweight, floating pool or spa covers. These floating covers are not solid and no one can crawl or walk on them. They are not for safety.
- **Remember a child can drown in 1 inch of water so never leave them alone even in one of the small blow-up kiddie pools.**

Safety Tips

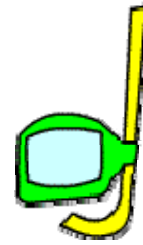


- **Never leave a child alone** out of eye contact supervision in or near the pool or spa - not even for a second.
- **Young children should never be considered water safe** despite their swimming skills, previous instruction or experience.
- **Access to the pool or spa should be limited** by locked doors or gates whenever pool activities cannot be supervised.
- **Teach your children good pool or spa safety habits:** no running, pushing playmates, no jumping on others, no diving or jumping in shallow water or "dunking".
- **Do not rely solely on plastic inner tubes, inflatable arm bands or other toys** to prevent accidents.



- **Keep toys, particularly tricycles or wheel toys, away from the pool or spa.** A child playing with these could accidentally fall into the water.
- **Do not allow anyone of any age to swim without a "spotter" nearby.** Examples of good safety behavior by adults are important for young children.

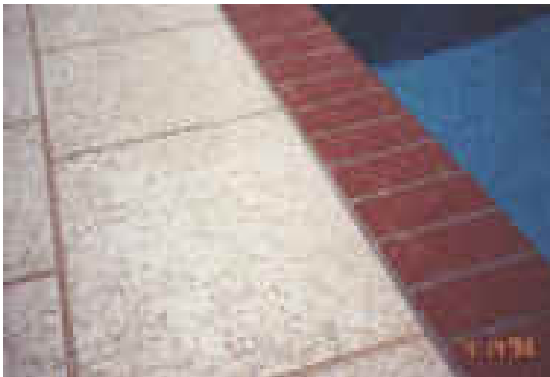
- **During social gatherings**, be certain that someone has the major responsibility for watching the children and swimmers at all times.
- **Do not permit playful screaming for help (false alarms)** which might mask a real emergency.
- **Teach your children** the most effective way to get out of the pool or spa quickly.
- **Do not allow your child to swim immediately after eating** a heavy meal.
- **Do not allow swimming during thunder** or other storms.
- **Do not allow glass** in the pool or spa area.



Do not allow the use of drugs or alcohol by persons using the pool or spa, or in the pool or spa area.

Pool Decks and Fences

Pool Decks



Decks of in-ground pools should be at least 4 feet wide. All walking surfaces (including steps and ladder treads) should be made of slip-resistant materials. Joints in pool decks should be kept caulked, and cracks patched to prevent water infiltration. Any crack with an elevation difference of 1/4" or more across should be repaired by removing and replacing the slab section. Decks should slope away from the pool to keep ground water out.

Fences

All pools should be surrounded by a fence at least 4' high. **(Maryland requires a 6' fence with no more than 4" between the ground and the bottom, 2" if unpaved.)** The gate should have a child-proof, self-closing latch, and be lockable. Above-ground pools sometimes have a raised deck; these should be guarded by a railing at least 27" high.





1. [Fencing](#) should totally surround the pool area.
2. Fencing should be six feet, in height in Maryland.
3. The bottom edges of fencing should be within four inches of pavement or within 2 inches of unpaved ground.
4. To prevent children from squeezing between vertical components of a fence, the spacing should not exceed 4 inches.
5. Fencing should provide no footholds or handholds that would facilitate climbing.
6. Diamond-shaped chain-link fence openings should be no larger than 1.75 inches, or have inserts to prevent climbing.
7. Gates should be self-closing, self-latching, and latch mechanisms should be out of reach of small children.
8. Gates should swing in a direction away from the pool (so small children do not push them open).
9. Gates for non-pedestrian use should remain locked when not in use.
10. When the exit doors from adjacent buildings enter directly into the pool area, each such door should be equipped with a self-closing device and an audible alarm.

Pools and spas can be very enticing to small children, sometimes with tragic results. By following these basic standards and consulting your local building department for additional requirements, your pool area should be reasonably protected from child access.